

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

IMPACT OF REVISING THE ARMY'S FEMALE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

by

Colonel Mark R. Lindon
United States Army

Dr. Douglas Johnson
Project Adviser

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CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

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The current Army policy excludes females from serving in a number of units and positions. Due to the new Army Modular design and the change in the type of warfare the Army is likely to face in the coming years, this policy no longer adequately supports the Army's ability to fight and win our nation's wars. It is time for the Army to change its policy on assigning females to units and positions. First, make the Forward Support Companies organic to the battalions they support. Second, open all MOS except Infantry, Armor, and Special Forces specific to females. Third, open all units, except Combined Arms Battalions and Reconnaissance Squadrons to females.

IMPACT OF REVISING THE ARMY'S FEMALE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

The Policy Review Group's findings...will improve Army readiness to perform its combat mission by: Providing a gender-free capability to match people to Army Military Occupational Specialties; providing a clearer understanding of where women will serve on the battlefield; and providing increased opportunity for both male and female soldiers to succeed.

—Women in the Army Policy Review
Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Department of the Army, Nov 82

Given the prospects of a long war on terrorism, fought primarily by ground forces, the U.S. Army must continue to recruit, retain, and promote quality soldiers. In order to do that, it must develop personnel policies that are fair and allow soldiers to develop to their full potential. The current policies on the assignment of female soldiers is neither fair nor does it offer female soldiers the same opportunities as male soldiers.

From a strategic leader's perspective, changing the female assignment policy will allow the Army to recruit from a larger population, and not just 18-24 year-old males. It will facilitate combat operations by incorporating the logistical assets within the combat units they support. It will offer female soldiers greater opportunity for promotion to higher ranking positions, both enlisted and officer. Finally, it will send a message to the American public that the Army is truly an equal opportunity employer.

History

Women have been serving in the U.S. Army since its formation in 1775. During the first one-hundred and twenty five years of its existence, women served in a number of jobs. These, included laundry, supply, and courier duties. These would be described as combat support and combat service support in today's vernacular¹. However, the vast majority of women served in the medical field, and once the specific conflict or need for service ended; the women returned to civilian life. In 1898, the Surgeon General of the Army established a Nurses Corps Division and in 1901, the Nurse Corps became a permanent corps of the Medical Department. This represented the first permanent nurse corps organization. Despite this advancement, there was still reluctance by many senior officials to have women permanently serve in the Army. During World War I, despite an increasing need for personnel with administrative skills, the Secretary of War (who was opposed to women being assigned to these types of jobs) disapproved the request to open these positions to women. Both the Navy and Marine Corps did enroll females in the reserves, but they were transferred to inactive status and discharged at the end of the war.²

After the declaration of war in December 1941, the Army sought to create ways to bring women into the service. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was established by Public Law 77-554 on May 14, 1942. Public law 78-110, (which eliminated the term auxiliary and formally established the Women's Army Corps (WAC) was passed that summer. While the WAAC law specifically excluded women from combatant roles, the WAC law did not. The WAC law also gave women military status, equal benefits and pay, and the same disciplinary code as men. However, Army regulations established after the WAC law was passed excluded women from "combat training that involved weapons or tactical exercises and from duty assignments that required weapons."³ By the end of World War II, more than 100,000 women had served as WACs.

During the nineteen fifties and early nineteen sixties, despite the Korean War, the Cold War, and the Vietnam conflict, the status of women in the Army did not change very much. The most significant accomplishment during this time was the establishment of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service (DACOWITS) by then Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall in 1951. DACOWITS was instrumental in opening more specialties to women and removing promotion restrictions that had been in place since the late 1940's.⁴

From 1968 to 1981, a period that saw the implementation of the All-Volunteer Force, a six-fold increase in enlisted female strength occurred in the Army.⁵ As a result of this growth, the Women in the Army Policy Review Group was formed to review all policies and programs relating to women in the Army. The intent was to "determine the effect these policies had on providing an environment conducive to the continual growth and meaningful service of all soldiers while improving combat readiness of the Army."⁶ This group was guided by two principles. First, whatever personnel policy decisions were made must support the primary mission of the Army to be ready to fight and win the nation's wars. The second principle was that these policies should maximize the potential of every soldier to contribute to the Army and its mission.⁷ The results of this review, titled Women in the Army Policy Review, were published in November 1982 under the auspices of the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (G-1).

As the nation transitioned from a draft to an all volunteer force, public opinion on women serving in the military was mixed. When asked by the Gallup Organization in 1979 whether women should be required to participate if a draft were reinstated to assist the Armed Forces in meeting recruitment objectives: 43% of the total population was in favor of women participating, and 50% of the total population was not in favor. Both sexes and virtually all age groups were about evenly split. When those who favored (43%) women participating in the draft were asked

if women should be eligible for combat roles, 19% were in favor and 22% were opposed to women serving in combat roles.⁸

When the same questions were asked less than a year later, 51% of the total population was in favor of women participating, and 45% of the total population was not in favor of women participating. The greatest increase in those in favor of women participating occurred in the female population (38% in 1979 versus 45% in 1980). When those who favored (51%) women participating in the draft were asked if women should be eligible for combat roles, 21% were in favor, and 28% were opposed to women serving in combat roles.⁹

Policy and Regulations

In 1977, then Secretary of the Army Clifford L. Alexander, Jr., issued his Combat Exclusion Policy which prohibited women from serving in Infantry, Armor, Cannon Field Artillery, Combat Engineer, and Low Altitude Air Defense Artillery units of Battalion/Squadron or smaller size.¹⁰ This Combat Exclusion Policy, coupled with the 1982 Women in the Army Policy Review, formed the basis for publication of Army Regulation (AR) 600-13, Policy for the Assignment of Female Soldiers, on 27 March 1992. This regulation specifically established the personnel assignment policy for female soldiers. Females were allowed to serve in any specialty or position

...except in those specialties, positions, or units (battalion size or smaller) which are assigned a routine mission to engage in direct combat, or which collocate routinely with units assigned a direct combat mission.¹¹

Direct ground combat was further defined as engaging the enemy with individual/crew served weapons, exposure to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the enemy, or located well forward on the battlefield while locating/defeating the enemy with fires, maneuver, or shock effect.¹² Collocation is further defined as occurring when

the position or unit routinely physically locates and remains with a military unit assigned a doctrinal mission to routinely engage in direct combat. Specifically, positions in units or sub-units which routinely collocate with units assigned a direct combat mission are closed to women. An entire unit will not be closed because a sub-unit routinely collocates with a unit assigned a direct combat mission. The sub-unit will be closed to women.¹³

In January 1994, the Secretary of Defense Les Aspin implemented a new assignment policy for women under the auspices of the Direct Ground Combat Assignment Rule (DGCAR). Under this policy, women are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is direct ground combat. The new policy further stated that the Services were

permitted to close positions if: the units and positions were required to physically collocate and remain with direct ground combat units, the service Secretary attests that the cost of providing appropriate living arrangements for women is prohibitive (this applies to the Navy, and almost exclusively to submarines and small surface vessels such as mine sweepers and coastal patrol ships), the units are engaged in special operations forces missions or long-range reconnaissance, or job related physical requirements would exclude the vast majority of women. As of September 1999, no jobs were closed to women because of job-related physical requirements.¹⁴

Following Desert Storm/Shield, where approximately 26,000 females (representing 8% of the total force) deployed, public opinion on women serving in combat jobs changed dramatically. When asked by the Gallup Organization in 1992 whether women should serve in combat jobs, 55% were in favor of women serving in these types of jobs and 42% were opposed. The percentage of those in favor of women serving in combat roles more than doubled in just 12 years.¹⁵

While policies and procedures have been changing, the number of women that have deployed during the nation's conflicts has continued to climb. In Operation Urgent Fury, the 1983 invasion of Grenada, 179 females, representing approximately 2% of the total force deployed in support of combat operations. In Operation Just Cause, the 1989 invasion of Panama, the percentage of females deploying increased to 4%. Today, more than 13,000 females are currently deployed in support of OIF/OEF.¹⁶ In 2005, women made up more than 14% of the Active Duty force, an increase from 10% in 1985.¹⁷ However, the assignment of female soldiers today is still restricted by the policy first established in 1982. As the recent saga of PFC Jessica Lynch showed us, the lines between direct and indirect combat have been blurred. Female soldiers are involved in increasingly dangerous operations that may inadvertently place them in a direct ground combat situation.

Issues

There are two criteria used to govern the specific assignment of female soldiers. The first is the coding of the unit that they can be assigned to. All tactical units in the Army, regardless of their size or location on the battlefield, have a Direct Combat Position Coding (DCPC), which reflects the likelihood of that specific unit becoming involved in direct combat actions and facing the likelihood of capture. The DCPC applies to Tables of Organization and Equipment (TOE) and Modification Tables of Organization and Equipment (MTOE). It does not apply to Tables of Distribution and Allowance (TDA) since these are peacetime support units that are coded

gender neutral. TDA type units rarely deploy and therefore it is highly unlikely that they will ever engage in ground combat operations.

The procedures for applying the DCPC to the unit are outlined in AR 600-13. The developers review the unit's doctrinal mission, battlefield location, and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) requirements. In addition to AR 600-13, the TOE developer must be familiar with the current Women in the Army (WITA) policy to ensure the TOE reflects the most up-to-date information. One of two codes is applied to the unit's TOE and MTOE positions.

(1) Positions will be coded closed (P1) only if: (a) The specialty or position requires routine engagement in direct combat. (b) The position is in a battalion or smaller size unit that has a mission of routine engagement in direct combat. (c) The position is in a unit that routinely collocates with battalion or smaller size units assigned a mission to engage in direct combat. (d) The position is in a portion of a unit that routinely collocates with a battalion or smaller size unit having a direct combat mission. (2) Positions will be coded open (P2) if they do not meet the criteria of a closed (P1) position as defined above.¹⁸

The developers of the TOE and MTOE analyze the unit as a whole and continue through sub-elements and individual positions ensuring that the correct code is applied to each individual position.

The second criterion used for assigning females is whether the specific MOS, regardless of unit type, is open or closed to females. The procedures for determining MOS specifications are outlined in Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 611-21 (Military Occupational Classification and Structure), 31 March 1999. To begin the process, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) proponent schools develop a MOS physical demands analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to assign soldiers to jobs for which they are physically qualified and indicate the physical work requirements for a soldier to perform the MOS tasks in a combat environment. The rating is the result of a physical demands analysis that assesses, in detail, the physical work requirements for every entry level MOS.¹⁹ The request is submitted, through TRADOC, to U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC). HRC will then staff the request throughout the Army Commands (ACOMs) as well as Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) staff and support agencies for review. Upon completion of the staffing and the resolution of all issues, the physical demands analysis is submitted to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (G-1), HQDA, for final approval. HRC will then issue guidance on whether that specific MOS is open or closed to females.

As a result of these policies and processes the actual assignment of females to units is confusing and does not pass the common sense test. It is possible for a female soldier to have an MOS that is open to females, but the unit is closed to females. Conversely, there are units

that are opened to females, but due to specific MOS requirements, female soldiers cannot possess that MOS and therefore cannot be assigned to that unit. More importantly, under the new modular design, the way the Army organizes and deploys for combat does not reflect our policies.

Analysis of Effects of Modularity Force Design Changes on the Issue

Since World War 1, the Division has been the Army's building block for deployment and combat operations. Normally consisting of approximately 12,000 – 20,000 soldiers (depending on the type), divisions were fixed with interconnecting parts (maneuver, artillery, and engineer, etc.) designed to fight other divisions. They required extensive reorganization to conduct any other type of operation other than major combat. Since the end of World War II, Divisions have been designed, trained, manned, and equipped to fight Cold War forces (Soviet Union) on linear-type battlefields. These battlefields consisted of deep, close, and rear areas of operations. Deep operations are generally conducted beyond the line of friendly troops and are directed against supporting forces and functions. Rocket Field Artillery, Aviation, and Special Forces are the types of units that conduct deep operations. Close area operations involve friendly forces that are in immediate contact with enemy forces and thus are exposed to the greatest risk. Infantry, Armor, Field Artillery Cannon units, and some Engineer units typically occupy terrain and conduct operations in this area. Rear area operations consist of logistical and other functions. Unit missions are to provide logistical, personnel, and other types of support.²⁰

Given this doctrine, it is easy to see how the policies on assignment of females could be as restrictive as it was. Placing them in the rear operations areas or in units that did not routinely operate in the close operations area kept them out of direct ground combat. The Army could show that it was opening up more units to females while at the same time averting a potential public opinion disaster caused by having women become casualties in the next conflict.

In October 2003, GEN Peter Schoomaker, the new Chief of Staff of the Army, directed TRADOC to begin changing the design and force structure composition of the Army. The basis of this change was the shift from a Division-focused Army to an Army built around Brigade Combat Teams (BCT). These BCTs would be more flexible, easily deployed, and most importantly, able to conduct sustained combat operations with minimal augmentation from higher headquarters or Echelon above Division (EAD) and Echelon above Corps (EAC) units. Under the new modular design, elements that had been previously assigned to different higher

headquarters (Division Artillery battalions, Engineer Brigade companies, and Military Intelligence Battalions) would now be organic to the BCT. Additionally, the BCT would be capable of conducting operations in non-linear, non-contiguous areas. Due to this re-design, more units, and more positions that could potentially be held by females, were brought under the direct command and control of the Brigade Commander.

An analysis of the Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT) will highlight the changes. An HBCT is composed of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), a Field Artillery Battalion, two Combined Arms Battalions (formally the Infantry and Armored Battalions), an Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, a Brigade Support Battalion, and a Brigade Special Troops Battalion. The total authorized strength of the HBCT is 3,784.²¹ Of the seven separate units within the HBCT, four (the two Combined Arms Battalions, the Field Artillery Battalion, and the Armored Reconnaissance Squadron) are closed to females. Within these four units there are a number of MOS that are open to females, but because the unit is coded P1 (closed to females), females are excluded from serving. Examples of these positions include: signal support systems specialist (25U), unit supply specialist (92Y), and human resources specialists (42A). The two Combined Arms Battalions each have 121 of these positions, the Field Artillery Battalion has 107, and the Armored Reconnaissance Squadron has 100. The remaining three units (the HHC, the Brigade Support Battalion, and the Brigade Special Troops Battalion) are open to females except for the MOS that are specifically closed to females. However, some of these MOS could be open to females. Three MOS that are closed to females, yet are in sections or sub-units that are open to females are; M1 Abrams Tank System Maintainer (63A), Artillery Mechanic (63D), and Bradley Fighting Vehicle System Maintainer (63M). Within the HBCT, there are 165 positions of this type. In aggregate, approximately 614 positions, (representing 16% of the total HBCT structure) could be opened to females. The traditional combat jobs, Infantry (Career Management Field (CMF) 11), Field Artillery (CMF 13), and Armor (CMF 19) would still be closed to females.²² In an active duty force of approximately 482,000, 614 is less than .0001 percent. However, according to the latest Army structure (ARSTRUC) message, there will be 17 HBCTs in the force²³. Multiplying that number by 614 results in 10,438 positions that could be opened to females. This represents 8.1 % of the total number of positions (129,000) within the Active component that are currently closed to females.²⁴ This analysis does not include the Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT), or any of the support EAB units.

Analysis of the Fires Brigade, one of the five types of support brigades, shows the potential for opening more positions to females. The Fires Brigade combines the assets and

capabilities of the Division Artillery (DIVARTY), Field Artillery Brigades, and Corps Artillery Headquarters, and their subordinate units. The mission of the Fires Brigade is to

plan, prepare, execute, and assess combined arms operations to provide close support and precision strike for Corps, Divisions, and Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) and Support Brigades employing Joint and organic fires and capabilities to achieve distribution effects in support of commanders' operational and tactical objectives.²⁵

One of the organic units of the Fires Brigade is the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery (HHB). The mission of the HHB is to "provide command, control, and administrative supervision of organic and attached Field Artillery units"²⁶. It does not have a mission of direct combat with the enemy. It does not doctrinally locate with units that would engage in direct combat with the enemy. Because of its mission, the unit is open to female soldiers. However, of the 93 enlisted soldier positions authorized, 34 (37%) are coded with MOS 13D, Field Artillery Tactical Data Systems Specialist, and 13F, Fire Support Specialist, that are closed to females. Of the unit's 23 separate sub-sections, seven have both male and female soldiers authorized within these sub-sections.²⁷ In paragraph 101 (Headquarters Section), the commander is an O-6 (Colonel) Field Artillery Officer (13A00), coded as open to females. The commander's driver is coded as an E-3 (Private First Class) (13D10), coded as closed to females. It is this specific coding of the MOS that precludes females from serving in some of these sections. By changing the coding of the 13D and 13F MOS that are specifically closed to females but are within the HHB of the Fires Brigades that are open from P1 to P2, it is possible to open up 138 (23 positions multiplied by 6 Active component Fires Brigades equals 138) positions that could be opened to females.²⁸

Recent Trends

Recent public opinion polls continue to show support for expanding the role of females in the military. In a December 2003 Gallup poll, when asked if women should receive combat assignments, "more than 8 in 10 Americans think women should either have the opportunity, or be required, to serve the same combat assignments as men do."²⁹ More women than men favored women serving in combat assignments. The age group that would make up the forces (18-29 year-olds) was less opposed (8%) to women serving than older (age 50 or higher) Americans (22%)

In May 2005, The Gallup Organization conducted a follow-up poll for CNN/USA Today. In the survey, respondents were again asked what their views were on women serving in combat zones and specifically, serving in Iraq. Approximately 72% favored women serving anywhere in

Iraq. More than two-thirds (67%) support women serving in combat zones as support for ground troops. Not surprisingly, the biggest support for women serving is in the population group that would have to serve (18-29 year olds) where 60% are in favor of women serving. This contrasts with 33% of those aged 65 and older.³⁰ Clearly public opinion has changed over the last few decades and now supports women serving in combat zones.

An unstated consequence of limiting the assignment of female soldiers is the perceived discrimination against women in obtaining key positions in the military. Without the ability to serve in command and key positions in combat, women may not have the pre-requisites to assume 3 and 4 Star General positions. LTG Claudia J. Kennedy was appointed to her position as Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2) in 1997. Since then, only one other female officer, LTG Ann E. Dunwoody, (Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics (G-4)) has served in one of the Department of the Army principal billets. The Army has never had a female Vice Chief of Staff of the Army or Chief of Staff of the Army.

Our elected officials continue to be keenly interested in this issue. On May 18, 2005, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) approved legislation to codify current Department of Defense (DoD) regulations on women in combat. Following a meeting between Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Congressman Duncan Hunter (HASC Chairman), in which Secretary Rumsfeld assured Chairman Hunter that DoD would review the assignments of females in combat, the legislation was withdrawn. In its place, Chairman Hunter substituted language in the FY07 Defense Authorization Bill (HR 1815) mandating a full report by March 31, 2006. In January 2006, Title 10, United States Code Section 652 was signed into law stating that the Secretary of Defense is required to report to Congress on any proposed change to the Ground Combat Exclusion Rule. The law further states that Congress must be in session for 60 consecutive days before any changes can be implemented. Finally, the law formalized the report requirement stipulated in HR 1815.³¹ The Department of Defense has contracted with the RAND Corporation to examine the status of females in the military. The report was submitted to DoD in January 2007.

The U.S. Senate became involved on May 26, 2005; Senate Bill 1134 was introduced by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D, NY) on behalf of herself and five other senators that stated;

It is the sense of Congress that –

(1) Women play a critical role in the accomplishment of the mission of the Armed Forces; and

(2) There should be no change to existing statutes, regulations, or policy that would have the effect of decreasing the roles or positions available to women in the Armed Forces.³²

Significance

What is the strategic significance of changing the DCPC to open more positions to females? There are two areas that changing the assignment of female soldiers affects. First is recruiting. Quite simply, the Army is facing a challenge in recruiting. The United States Army Accessions Command (USAAC) estimates that there are 15.4 million males aged 17-24 in the U.S. Of these, approximately 2.2 million (12%) are fully qualified (USAAC defines fully qualified as having a high school diploma (or equivalent) and qualifying scores on the military entrance exams). While that might seem to be a significant population to recruit from, other factors work to reduce the target population even further. Approximately 67% of high school graduates go on to college after graduation. Only 15% of youths surveyed indicated they would definitely or probably serve in the military in the next few years. Finally, relative to the other Services, the Army is still most likely to be considered ordinary, and is considered the Service of last resort by more than 50% of those surveyed who indicated a predisposition to serve.³³ Each one of these factors further diminishes the pool that Army recruiters can draw from. By opening more positions to females, the Army's recruiters can target more of the female 17-24 year-old population. They can continue to target the males for the direct combat jobs.

The second key area that would be affected by changing the assignment of females is in promotion potential. Within each enlisted career field in the Army, the lower enlisted personnel advance from skill level 10 (Private First Class and Specialist) through skill level 20 (Sergeants), skill level 30 (Staff Sergeants), skill level 40 (Sergeants First Class) up to skill level 50 (First Sergeant or Senior Sergeant). All soldiers who have attained the skill level 50 identifier are then eligible to compete for Command Sergeant Major (CSM) (00Z50), which is open to females. Within the career management fields that are open to females, each soldier has the potential to advance to CSM. Within several career management fields, Field Artillery (13), Engineer (21), and Mechanical Maintenance (63) a number of MOS within these career management fields are closed to females, thus limiting the entry level positions for female soldiers. If the objective of the Army promotion system is to select the best for advancement, we cannot exclude a segment of the force from even getting into the system to start with just because they are female.

Recommendations

First, the Army should change its policy on the assignment of females to reflect the way that units are actually deploying into combat. Forward Support Companies (FSC), along with artillery and other type units deploy and co-locate with their supported battalions, regardless of where on the battlefield they are located. Because of this co-location, according to current Army policy, the FSCs should be closed to females. However, they are not. Lessons learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), have shown that females are in positions in units that co-locate with units directly engaged in direct combat. In a February 2006 report, the Center for Military Readiness states that within the 3rd Brigade 1st Cavalry Division, the FSCs are

op-conned (authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish missions assigned to the command.”³⁴) to combat maneuver battalions.³⁵

The report goes on to state that

on paper these op-conned FSCs are part of the brigade level BSB and are manned by it. But in actual operation, they collocate or are embed with the combat maneuver battalions at all times. In the field, they do not, at any time, go back to actual control by the brigade-level BSB.³⁶

CMR reports that this practice is also being done in the 3rd and the 4th Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne Division.³⁷ All FSCs should be removed from the MTOE of the logistical support element that they are currently assigned to and become an organic unit of the maneuver and field artillery battalions that they support.

Second, the Army should re-look which specific MOS are open to females. For example, the job description of a Field Artillery Radar Operator (13R) includes a physical demands rating of heavy. The job description of a Field Artillery Surveyor (13S) and a Field Artillery Meteorological Crewmember (13W) includes a physical demands rating of very heavy. Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 611-21, Military Occupational Classification and Structure, 22 January 2007, defines heavy as lift on an occasional basis a maximum of 100 pounds with frequent or constant lifting of 50 lbs. DA PAM 611-21 defines very heavy as lifting on an occasional basis over 100 pounds with frequent or constant lifting in excess of 50 pounds. Field Artillery Radar Operator positions are closed to females. The Field Artillery Surveyors and Meteorological Crewmember positions are open to females even though their physical demand rating is higher. There are no physical demands that preclude a female from serving as a Field Artillery Radar operator. Nor does the doctrinal employment of these soldiers place them within

range of an enemies direct fire weapons. The same can be said of the three MOS within the 63 CMF that are closed to females. The M1 Abrams Tank System Maintainer (63A), the Artillery Mechanic (63D), and the Bradley Fighting Vehicle System Maintainer (63M) all have physical demands ratings of very heavy. In fact, all of the 63 CMF positions have a physical demands rating of very heavy and, except for the three cited above, all others are open to females.

Third, opening more positions to females seems to have the support of the American public, despite the risks. As recently as May 2005, public opinion polls suggest that more and more Americans support females in serving in combat zones.³⁸ As more females are indirectly involved in direct ground combat operations, there is the potential that more females will become casualties. Through December 2006, approximately 2% of all casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan have been female. 62 service women from all branches have died in Iraq, about two-thirds of them in hostile fire. By comparison, in World War II, historians say, 16 women were killed in action. In Vietnam, one woman's life was claimed by enemy fire; in the Persian Gulf War, five.³⁹ "It is a scenario that experts once predicted would lead to a public outcry against "women in body bags." Instead, the casualties appear to have melded into the nation's experience of war."⁴⁰ There are a number of reasons why this may be true. First, Americans appear to tolerate more violence, and are not shocked by women being killed in combat. Second, due to the Department of Defense limiting access to the return of casualties to the United States, most Americans are not even aware of the female casualties.

Photographs of body bags and coffins are rarely seen. And nobody wants to kick up a fuss and risk insulting grieving families.' The public doesn't seem concerned they are dying," said Charles Moskos, a military sociologist at Northwestern University who has closely studied national service.⁴¹

While the absence of public outcry does not translate into overt support, it seems to indicate tacit support.

Conclusion

The Army must change its female assignment policy in order to allow it to better compete for quality recruits. As the Army competes with the other Services and the private sector for the coveted 17-24 year old population, the more opportunities it can provide for female soldiers, the more likely it is to recruit a greater number of soldiers. Changing these policies will also facilitate the retention of quality soldiers. It will improve the combat effectiveness of the combat units within the BCTs by incorporating all assets under one commander. Finally, it can do this and not have an adverse affect on readiness.

Endnotes

¹ Gwen Gibson, *Breaking the Mold: Issue Redefinition and Policy Change Concerning Women in Combat* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 2000), 61.

² Ibid., 62.

³ Bettie J. Morden, *The Women's Army Corp 1945-1978*, Army Historical Series (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), 14.

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